

Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSCE-00 SAB-01 L-01 H-01
EB-04 PM-03 SP-02 INR-05 PRS-01 EUR-08 OES-02
MCT-01 SY-02 IO-06 HA-02 CU-02 /066 W
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R 111319Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5205

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 4 PANAMA 0160

LIMDIS

NO DISTRIBUTION OUTSIDE DEPARTMENT EXCEPT PASS WHITE HOUSE
FOR HAMILTON JORDAN

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR, PINT, PN
SUBJECT: THE TREATIES AND THE SENATE: WHAT IF?

I. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

AS SEEN FROM PANAMA, THE WORST THAT CAN HAPPEN IS FOR
THE SENATE TO REJECT THE TREATY WHEN IT COMES UP EARLY THIS
YEAR. BUT OTHER OPTIONS WHICH ARE OFTEN DISCUSSED--APPROVAL
OF A SUBSTANTIVELY AMENDED TREATY AND POSTPONEMENT OF A VOTE
UNTIL LATE 1978 OR 1979--ARE NOT VERY PALATABLE ALTERNATIVES.
FAIRLY SERIOUS VIOLENCE IS VERY LIKELY IF THERE IS A FLAT
REJECTION. IF THE VERDICT IS DELAY OR SUBSTANTIAL AMENDMENT,
PREDICTION BECOMES MORE DIFFICULT. BUT THE OUTLOOK IS ALSO
FOR TROUBLE, THOUGH NOT NECESSARILY AS IMMEDIATE OR SPONT-
ANEOUS AS WOULD BE THE CASE IF THE TREATIES ARE REJECTED
OUTRIGHT.

EVEN IF THE TREATIES ARE NOT APPROVED IN THE NEXT
FEW MONTHS, WE BELIEVE TORRIJOS WOULD PROBABLY RPT
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PROBABLY NOT FOMENT TROUBLE FOR US--IF HE FELT THERE
WAS A GOOD CHANCE OF APPROVAL IN A REASONABLE TIME.
WE SAY THIS BECAUSE HE APPEARS TO HAVE A GENUINE
FAITH IN PRESIDENT CARTER'S GOOD WILL. BUT ONE CANNOT
BE SURE: TORRIJOS HAS A VOLATILE TEMPERAMENT; IT IS
NOT EASY TO PREDICT WHAT HE WILL DO. FURTHER, HIS GOVERN-
MENT REMAINS UNDER SEVERE AND INCREASING STRAIN DUE TO

DOMESTIC ECONOMIC PROBLEMS THAT WILL PERSIST IN THEIR PRESENT FORM AT LEAST UNTIL AFTER THE TREATIES ARE RATIFIED. WE ALSO BELIEVE, THEREFORE, THAT THERE WILL BE SPONTANEOUS TROUBLE HERE IF THE TREATIES ARE NOT APPROVED (WHATEVER FORM THAT NON-APPROVAL MAY TAKE) AND THAT TORRIJOS MAY NOT BE ABLE--OR WILLING TO TAKE THE UNPOPULAR MEASURES NECESSARY--TO KEEP THIS PROTEST FROM BLOSSOMING INTO SOMETHING THAT WOULD CAUSE AN ANTI-TREATY BACKLASH IN THE U.S.

TREATY REJECTION WOULD NOT BRING THE TORRIJOS GOVERNMENT DOWN, IN OUR JUDGMENT. IN FACT, IT MIGHT CAUSE A SURGE OF PATRIOTIC SUPPORT IN THE SHORT RUN. IN THE LONGER RUN, HOWEVER, REJECTION WOULD BE DESTABILIZING FOR TORRIJOS AND FOR PANAMANIAN SOCIETY AS A WHOLE.

WE CONTINUE TO BELIEVE STRONGLY THAT APPROVAL OF THE TREATIES WITHOUT SUBSTANTIAL AMENDMENT IS BY FAR THE BEST SAFEGUARD OF OUR INTERESTS BOTH HERE AND THROUGHOUT THE WORLD.

II. THE OPTIONS

THE SENATE HAS FOUR OPTIONS ON THE CANAL QUESTION IN THE NEXT COUPLE OF MONTHS. IT CAN APPROVE THE TREATIES (WITH OR WITHOUT "UNDERSTANDINGS", E.G., THE SECRET

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OCTOBER 14 STATEMENT, THAT PANAMA WOULD ACCEPT); ATTACH AMENDMENTS, RESERVATIONS OR UNDERSTANDINGS THAT WOULD REQUIRE RENEGOTIATION; DEFEAT THEM; OR PUT OFF ACTION UNTIL LATER. THIS CABLE DISCUSSES THE LATTER THREE ALTERNATIVES AND THEIR LIKELY IMPACT IN PANAMA. (IF THE TREATIES ARE APPROVED, WE FACE A WHOLE NEW SET OF PROBLEMS. BUT WE WILL RESERVE THAT QUESTION FOR ANOTHER CABLE.)

III. REJECTION

THE TREATIES' DEFEAT IS THE LEAST APPEALING PROSPECT. PANAMA'S REACTION WOULD FALL INTO TWO CATEGORIES--THAT WHICH THE GOVERNMENT CAN (TO A DEGREE) CONTROL AND CHANNEL, AND THAT WHICH IS SPONTANEOUS AND DEFIES GOVERNMENT MANIPULATION.

THE IMMEDIATE REACTION TO REJECTION WOULD BE A SPONTANEOUS OUTBURST OF ANGER HERE, IN WHICH THE GOVERNMENT WOULD BE OBLIGED INITIALLY TO JOIN TO MAINTAIN ITS BONA FIDES--THIS IT WOULD HAVE TO DO IF IT WISHED TO RETAIN ANY CAPABILITY TO DIVERT THE REACTION INTO PATHS

WHICH WOULD NOT DESTROY ALL CHANCE OF APPROVAL OF ANY
TREATY IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

IT IS DIFFICULT TO ASSESS PRECISELY HOW THE PANA-
MANIAN PEOPLE WOULD REACT AFTER THE INITIAL OUTBURST.
SOME SAY PANAMANIANA ARE BASICALLY PEACEABLE: THEY
BARK MIGHTILY BUT DO NOT BITE VERY DEEPLY. THESE
PEOPLE--AND THEY ARE FAIRLY NUMEROUS BOTH
PANAMANIAN AND AMERICAN RESIDENTS HERE--BELIEVE THAT
THE NON-VIOLENT STRAIN IN PANAMANIAN CULTURE, COUPLED
WITH ECONOMIC IMPERATIVES, WOULD KEEP THE REACTION FROM
BECOMING BLOODY. THIS "BEST CASE" SCENARIO
CALLS FOR A FEW THOUSAND (OR EVEN FEWER) DEMONSTRATORS
IN THE STREETS FOR A FEW DAYS, A RITUAL STONING OF
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THE EMBASSY, A FEW SYMBOLIC INCURSIONS INTO THE ZONE,
AND THOUSANDS OF UNPLEASANT WORDS. AFTER THAT, PANAMA
WOULD TRY TO RETURN TO THE NEGOTIATING TABLE AND RESUME
HER 70-YEAR DIPLOMATIC EFFORT TO CHANGE THINGS.

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MCT-01 SY-02 IO-06 HA-02 CU-02 /066 W
-----120998 112148Z /72

R 111319Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5206

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 4 PANAMA 0160

LIMDIS

NO DISTRIBUTION OUTSIDE DEPARTMENT EXCEPT PASS WHITE HOUSE
FOR HAMILTON JORDAN

IT IS HARD TO KNOW WHERE TO STOP IN DESCRIBING A

WORST CASE. PEOPLE HERE WHO SPEAK OF "ANOTHER VIET NAM" KNOW LITTLE ABOUT VIET NAM. OTHERS FORESEE A SHARP TURN TO THE LEFT BY TORRIJOS, WITH A DRASTIC INCREASE IN CUBAN AND SOVIET INFLUENCE. WE DOUBT THE LIKELIHOOD OF ANY SUCH APOCALYPTIC TURN OF EVENTS, FOR MANY REASONS. TO CITE A FEW: THE LEFT IS WEAK IN PANAMA; THE NATIONAL GUARD HIERARCHY IS LARGELY TO THE RIGHT, NOT THE LEFT, OF TORRIJOS; THE GUARD IS A PRETTY GOOD POLICE FORCE BUT NO FIGHTING FORCE VIS-A-VIS THE US--AND KNOWS IT; THE ECONOMY WOULD COLLAPSE UNDER THE WEIGHT OF AN EXTENDED CONFRONTATION WITH THE US, AND MOST PANAMANIAN KNOW WHAT THEY WOULD DO TO THEIR ALREADY SHAKY STANDARD OF LIVING; AND PANAMA WOULD ALMOST SURELY TRY TO KEEP WORLD OPINION ON ITS SIDE, WHILE ARMED EXTREMISM OR RADICAL ASSOCIATION WITH THE COMMUNISTS WOULD ALIENATE MUCH OF THAT OPINION, ESPECIALLY IN LATIN AMERICA.

WHAT IS A MORE REALISTIC WORST CASE? WE BELIEVE
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THAT SERIOUS RIOTS ON THE BORDERS OF AND WITHIN THE ZONE ARE LIKELY; THESE COULD REQUIRE REINFORCEMENT OF CANAL ZONE POLICE BY THE U.S. ARMY. DEATHS COULD OCCUR. THERE COULD BE EPISODIC TERRORISM IN THE ZONE: THREATS AGAINST PERSONNEL; ATTEMPTS AT SABOTAGE; EVEN BOMBS IN PUBLIC PLACES. SIMILAR ACTS COULD EVEN BE DIRECTED AGAINST SHIPPING OR THE CANAL ITSELF. THIS DANGER WOULD OBVIOUSLY BE INTENSIFIED IF INTERNATIONAL TERRORISTS SHOULD BECOME INTERESTED IN THE SUBJECT. THE DEBATE ABOUT THE "DEFENSIBILITY" OF THE CANAL COULD BECOME MOOT IF THE THREAT TO PERSONNEL OR SHIPPING SHOULD GROW ACUTE. AND IT COULD BECOME ACUTE, WITH LITTLE OR NO ACTUAL INCURSION INTO THE ZONE.

THE COURSE CHOSEN BY THE TORRIJOS GOVERNMENT, AND THE RANGES OF ACTION WHICH IT CAN COMMAND OR INFLUENCE, WILL BE INCREASINGLY IMPORTANT IN SHAPING EVENTS BEYOND THE INITIAL INDIGNATION. AND THE ADMINISTRATION'S REACTION TO REJECTION WILL BE A MAJOR DETERMINANT OF THIS GOVERNMENT'S CHOICES. SO LONG AS TORRIJOS RETAINS HIS FAITH IN PRESIDENT CARTER'S GOOD WILL, AND PERCEIVES THE OUTLOOK FOR ULTIMATE REVERSAL OF THE REJECTION AS LESS THAN HOPELESS, WE BELIEVE THAT HE WOULD TRY (BUT MIGHT NOT BE CAPABLE OF SUCCESS) TO HOLD PUBLIC REACTION TO AN ACCEPTABLE LEVEL AND USE IT TO LEVER THE U.S. ALONG. HOWEVER, THIS IS A VERY CHANCY AND SUBJECTIVE MATTER TO ASSESS BEFORE THE FACT. AT ANY TIME, TORRIJOS COULD DECIDE TO PULL UNCLE SAM'S BEARD, IF ONLY (AS HE WOULD SEE IT) TO KEEP OUR ATTENTION. THE GOVERNMENT HAS STRONG INFLUENCE IN THE

STUDENT MOVEMENT AND COULD, IF IT CHOSE, INSTIGATE DEMON-
STRATION AND POSSIBLY RIOTS WHICH WOULD APPEAR TO BE
SPONTANEOUS. THIS GOVERNMENT HAS DONE SUCH THINGS IN THE
PAST AND, AS FAR AS MOST PANAMANIAN CAN TELL, GOTTEN
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AWAY WITH IT. THE TORRIJOS WHO SMILES FOR VISITING
AMERICAN DIGNITARIES ALSO KNOWS HOW TO FROWN.

BETWEEN THE "BEST" AND "WORST" CASES LIES A LOT OF
TERRITORY, WITH TORRIJOS' REACTIONS AN IMPONDERABLE BUT
IMPORTANT FACTOR. BUT THERE ARE SOME ELEMENTS COMMON TO
ALL "REJECTION" SCENARIOS. THE LOCAL SITUATION WOULD
BECOME TENSE, PROBABLY WITH SOME SERIOUS INCIDENT BETWEEN
AMERICANS AND PANAMANIAN. BLOODSHED IS A VERY REAL POSSIBILITY
AND IF PANAMANIAN ARE KILLED THE SITUATION COULD GET ENTIRELY
OUT OF HAND. THE POSSIBILITY OF THREATS OR ATTEMPTS TO INTERRUPT
CANAL TRAFFIC WOULD NOT BE NEGLIGIBLE. AND THERE WOULD BE A
GOOD CHANCE THAT ELEMENTS IN OR OUTSIDE THE GOVERNMENT
WOULD TRY TO USE CLANDESTINE TERROR TACTICS TO ATTEMPT
TO PRESSURE THE SENATE INTO CHANGING ITS MIND. TO
CONTROL THIS CHANCE (IF HE CHOOSES TO DO SO), AND TO
MINIMIZE DISTRACTIONS ON HIS DOMESTIC FLANK, TORRIJOS
COULD WELL BE LED TO REVERSE RECENT STEPS OF POLITICAL
LIBERALIZATION. A RENEWAL OF MORE REPRESSIVE TACTICS WOULD
AGGRAVATE THE "HUMAN RIGHTS" ISSUE, FURTHER
COMPLICATING THINGS IN WASHINGTON. ON THE INTER-
NATIONAL SCENE, PANAMA COULD BE COUNTED ON TO GIN UP
UNPLEASANTNESS FOR THE U.S., UNDOUBTEDLY INCLUDING SOME
SORT OF UN SPECTACULAR OF CONDEMNATION. A BREAK IN RELATIONS
WOULD BE POSSIBLE, PARTICULARLY IF VIOLENCE SHOULD OCCUR.
THUS, EVEN A "BEST CASE" REJECTION SCENARIO INCLUDES MANY
ELEMENTS WHICH WOULD BE UNCOMFORTABLE AND COULD EASILY
BECOME UNACCEPTABLE, FOR THE U.S.

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MCT-01 SY-02 IO-06 HA-02 CU-02 /066 W

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FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5207

S E C R E T SECTION 3 OF 4 PANAMA 0160

LIMDIS

NO DISTRIBUTION OUTSIDE DEPARTMENT EXCEPT PASS WHITE HOUSE
FOR HAMILTON JORDAN

TREATY REJECTION WOULD PUT INTERNAL PRESSURES ON
THE TORRIJOS GOVERNMENT WHICH, IN THE LONG RUN, MIGHT
WELL BRING IT DOWN AND SERIOUSLY DESTABILIZE PANAMANIAN
SOCIETY AS WELL. CERTAINLY AN ALREADY BAD ECONOMIC
SITUATION WOULD LIKELY WORSEN. THE FISCAL INTEGRITY
OF THE GOVERNMENT MIGHT BE UNDERMINED, AND THE SPECTER
OF MISSED PAYROLLS WOULD LOOM AGAIN AS IT DID A YEAR
AGO. BUT--AND THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT--IN THE SHORT
RUN, THE TREATIES' DEFEAT WOULD GIVE TORRIJOS A GREAT
POLITICAL FILLIP. VIRTUALLY ALL PANAMANIAN--EVEN
THOSE WHO OPPOSED RATIFICATION IN THE PLEBISCITE--
WOULD FEEL OBLIGED TO RALLY AROUND THE FLAG, AND
TORRIJOS WOULD BE MUCH FREER TO COERCE THOSE WHO
FORGOT TO DO SO. THIS UPSURGE WOULD NOT ONLY KEEP
TORRIJOS IN POWER FOR MONTHS, BUT MIGHT ALSO ENCOURAGE
HIM TO TAKE SOME RASH DECISION WHICH WOULD MAKE LATER
SENATE APPROVAL MORE DIFFICULT. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE
TO SAY HOW LONG A POST-DEFEAT PSYCHOLOGY WOULD BENEFIT
TORRIJOS, BUT IT WOULD BE SEVERAL MONTHS AT LEAST,
OR POSSIBLY LONGER, DEPENDING ON MANY ECONOMIC AND
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POLITICAL FACTORS.

IV. APPROVAL WITH AMENDMENTS

APPROVAL OF THE TREATIES WITH AMENDMENTS OR
RESERVATIONS WHICH ARE TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE TO PANAMA
WOULD BE ONLY marginally preferable TO OUTRIGHT REJECTION.
IT WOULD DEPRIVE THE GOVERNMENT OF A BLACK-AND-
WHITE ISSUE TO PRESENT TO ITS PEOPLE AND THE WORLD. BUT
THIS COULD UNDOUBTEDLY BE OVERCOME IF THE GOVERNMENT
SAW NO CHANCE OF REVERSING THE SENATE ACTION (OR
LOST FAITH IN THE ADMINISTRATION'S WILL TO CONTINUE
THE FIGHT TO DO SO) AND CHOSE INSTEAD TO CONFRONT THE
U.S.

ON THE OTHER HAND, NEITHER DO WE WANT TO SAY FLATLY THAT ANY SUBSTANTIVE CHANGE IN THE TREATIES WOULD KILL THEM; IT DEPENDS. DEPENDING UPON THE CLOSENESS OF THE VOTE, THE NATURE OF THE AMENDMENTS AND THE PANAMANIAN'S PERCEPTION OF THE CHANCE OF ULTIMATELY GETTING SOMETHING ACCEPTABLE, THIS CIRCUMSTANCE MIGHT--JUST MIGHT--LEAD PANAMA TO REOPEN NEGOTIATIONS.

RESPONSIBLE PANAMANIAN OFFICIALS HAVE TOLD VISITING SENATORS THAT INCORPORATION OF THE CARTER-TORRIJOS UNDERSTANDING OF OCTOBER 14 INTO THE SENATE RESOLUTION OF ADVICE AND CONSENT WOULD BE ACCEPTABLE TO PANAMA. THIS WAS AN AGREED INTERPRETATION, PUBLICLY ACKNOWLEDGED BY BOTH SIDES BEFORE THE PANAMANIAN PLEBISCITE OF OCTOBER 23. A NEW PLEBISCITE FOR THIS REASON ALONE IS THEREFORE IMPROBABLE.

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HOWEVER, THE MORE ANY "UNDERSTANDING" OR RESERVATION DEVIATES FROM THE OCTOBER 14 STATEMENT, THE MORE LIKELY IT WOULD BE TO PROVOKE DEMANDS HERE FOR A NEW VOTE ON THE TREATY AS A WHOLE. SUBSTANTIVE AMENDMENT OF THE TREATY ITSELF WOULD ALMOST CERTAINLY CAUSE A MAJOR OUTCRY FOR A NEW VOTE. THERE IS NO AUTHORITATIVE WAY TO DETERMINE IN ADVANCE WHAT CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD LEGALLY REQUIRE A NEW PLEBISCITE; PRESUMABLY, THIS WOULD HAVE TO BE DETERMINED BY PANAMA'S SUPREME COURT IF ANY OPPONENT SHOULD SEEK TO BLOCK THE GOVERNMENT FROM EXCHANGING INSTRUMENTS OF RATIFICATION WITHOUT ONE. BUT THE POLITICAL FORCE OF THE DEMANDS, NOT THE LEGAL INTRICACIES, WOULD BE THE TELLING FACTOR. AND THAT FORCE WILL INCREASE IN DIRECT PROPORTION TO THE EXTENT AND ADVERSITY TO PANAMA OF DEVIATION FROM THE TREATIES AS THEY NOW STAND.

SOME RECENT CONVERSATIONS BETWEEN TORRIJOS AND VISITING SENATORS AND JOURNALISTS HAVE BEEN INTERPRETED AS SIGNALING HIS READINESS TO BE MORE FLEXIBLE THAN WE INDICATE ABOVE. THERE IS ROOM FOR DIFFERENCE ABOUT THE AMBIGUITY OF SOME OF TORRIJOS' STATEMENTS, AND HE HAS NEVER BEEN FAMOUS FOR HIS CONSISTENCY. MORE IMPORTANTLY, IT IS ESSENTIAL TO RECALL THAT HE IS NOT IN FACT AN ABSOLUTE DICTATOR HERE--HE HAS SURVIVED BY ACCOMMODATION, CONSENSUS AND 'SOFTENING' HIS PROBLEMS TO DEATH. TREATY RESERVATIONS OR AMENDMENTS SEEN HERE AS UNFAVORABLE TO PANAMA WOULD MAKE HIM HIGHLY VULNERABLE TO CHARGES OF CAVING IN COMPLETELY TO THE GRINGOS. HE MIGHT INORDINATELY COMPLICATE THE RESULTING RENEGOTIATION BY ASKING

FOR BALANCING CHANGES IN PANAMA'S FAVOR--WHICH WE ALMOST CERTAINLY COULD NOT GRANT. OR, HE MIGHT FARE BADLY IN ANOTHER PLEBISCITE, A CHANCE WHICH WE BELIEVE HE DOES NOT WANT TO TAKE.

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MCT-01 SY-02 IO-06 HA-02 CU-02 /066 W
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R 111319Z JAN 78
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5208

S E C R E T SECTION 4 OF 4 PANAMA 0160

LIMDIS

NO DISTRIBUTION OUTSIDE DEPARTMENT EXCEPT PASS WHITE HOUSE
FOR HAMILTON JORDAN

THE PANAMANIAN GOVERNMENT DOES NOT WANT TO HOLD ANOTHER PLEBISCITE. THE POLITICAL STRAIN OF THE LAST ONE, WITH ITS UNMISTAKABLY STRONG ANTI-GOVERNMENT VOTE, CONVINCED TORRIJOS AND HIS ADVISERS NOT TO WILLINGLY GO THROUGH THAT AGAIN. NATIONAL ELECTIONS ALREADY SCHEDULED FOR AUGUST 1978 ARE A FURTHER COMPLICATION. HE WOULD ENTER SUCH A PLEBISCITE IN AN EVEN WEAKER POSITION TO FACE CHARGES THAT HE HAS SOLD PANAMA'S SOVEREIGN BIRTHRIGHT TO THE YANKEES. THE STRAIN OF ANOTHER VOTE, ON A TREATY EVEN MORE FAVORABLE TO THE U.S., WOULD BE EVEN GREATER THAN THE LAST ONE ON AN ALREADY-STRAINED GOVERNMENT. AND IF THIS LED HIM TO CONCLUDE THAT HE COULD NOT STAND AN HONEST VOTE, WE COULD NOT STAND THE STORM THAT A DISHONEST ONE WOULD BRING. WHETHER OR NOT TORRIJOS SAYS--OR EVEN THINKS AT THE MOMENT--THAT HE MIGHT CONTEMPLATE ANOTHER PLEBISCITE AS THE PRICE OF RATIFICATION, WE ARE STRONGLY OF THE OPINION THAT IN THE END, IT IS A PRICE THAT EVEN IF HE SHOULD BE WILLING, HE MAY NOT BE ABLE TO PAY.

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IN SHORT, THE ADMINISTRATION SHOULD CONTINUE TO TRY TO AVOID ANY CHANGES AT ALL IN THE TREATIES, OTHER THAN FORMALIZATION OF THE CARTER-TORRIJOS STATEMENT. ANY CHANGES, EVEN APPARENTLY HARMLESS ONES, PROPOSED BY SENATORS SHOULD BE APPROACHED WITH THE FEAR AND RESPECT DUE A RATTLESNAKE.

V. POSTPONEMENT

THERE REMAINS THE OPTION OF POSTPONING ACTION IN THE SENATE. PRESIDENT CARTER WILL UNDOUBTEDLY HAVE HIS OWN REASONS, UNRELATED TO THE SITUATION HERE, FOR WANTING TO AVOID DELAY. BUT THE LOCAL ARGUMENTS AGAINST DELAY ARE ALSO COMPELLING. IN THE FIRST PLACE, POSTPONEMENT MIGHT BE INTERPRETED AS REJECTION AND THUS SET OFF A CHAIN OF EVENTS THAT WOULD MAKE LATER APPROVAL IMPOSSIBLE. ANTI-TORRIJOS AS WELL AS ANTI-TREATY FORCES WILL BE MORE THAN READY TO PUT THE WORST POSSIBLE READING ON A SENATE DECISION NOT TO VOTE EARLY THIS YEAR. IF TORRIJOS TOOK REPRESSIVE ACTION AGAINST SUCH OPPONENTS, THAT ALONE MIGHT WEAKEN SUPPORT FOR THE TREATIES IN THE SENATE. OR TORRIJOS HIMSELF MIGHT DECIDE EITHER THAT DELAY MEANT DEFEAT OR THAT EARLY FAVORABLE SENATE ACTION WOULD BE ADVANCED BY SOME UNPLEASANT "PRESSURE" ON THE US.

FURTHERMORE, DURING ANY DELAY, SOME INCIDENT UNRELATED TO THE TREATY COULD INTERVENE TO MAKE APPROVAL IMPOSSIBLE. THE BAD ECONOMIC SITUATION HERE AND THE CONTINUED WANING OF THE GOVERNMENT'S DOMESTIC POLITICAL STRENGTH MAKE SOME SUCH INCIDENT A REAL POSSIBILITY DURING THE NEXT YEAR OR SO IN THE ABSENCE OF A NEW TREATY.

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IT COULD MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN LOCAL REACTION WHETHER THE DELAY WERE ONLY UNTIL AFTER THE FALL ELECTIONS OR UNTIL 1979. IT MIGHT BE EASIER FOR TORRIJOS TO FIND "FUEL" FOR HIS "PATIENCE MACHINE" FOR AN ADDITIONAL SIX OR EIGHT MONTHS THAN FOR A LONGER, MORE INDEFINITE TIME.

DELAY WOULD BE BETTER THAN CERTAIN DEFEAT THIS SPRING. BUT WE ARE NOT OPTIMISTIC ABOUT LATER RATIFICATION IF WE FAIL TO GET THE VOTES NOW. SEVERAL

SENATORS HAVE TOLD US THEY BELIEVE THE TREATIES WOULD
BECOME AN ISSUE IN THE FALL CAMPAIGN AND THAT THE RESULT
COULD BE THE ELECTION OF A SENATE LESS INCLINED
TOWARD RATIFICATION THAN THE PRESENT ONE. EVEN THE
CAMPAIGN RHETORIC MIGHT CONVINCE TORRIJOS THAT HIS
CAUSE WAS LOST AND MAKE HIM DECIDE TO "SHOW US" HOW
THINGS REALLY ARE. WE BELIEVE TORRIJOS WILL PROBABLY
TRY TO KEEP THE LID ON AS LONG AS HE SEES A FAIRLY GOOD
CHANCE OF ULTIMATE RATIFICATION. BUT HE WILL NOT BE
IN CONTROL OF EVENTS; EVENTS MAY BE IN CONTROL OF HIM.

JORDEN

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TREATY RATIFICATION, AGREEMENTS, CANALS, GOVERNMENT REACTIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 11 jan 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978PANAMA00160
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780016-1172
Format: TEL
From: PANAMA
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780176/aaaacmez.tel
Line Count: 506
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 6f8eeae4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 10
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 28 mar 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3793812
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: THE TREATIES AND THE SENATE: WHAT IF? I. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS AS SEEN FROM PANAMA, THE WORST THAT CAN HAPPEN IS
TAGS: PBOR, PINT, PGOV, EWWT, PN, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/6f8eeae4-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014